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Govt manoeuvres 27th Amendment passage through Senate

• Bill passed with 64 to zero vote as two PTI, JUI-F senators go against party lines • Dar says federal constitutional court, balanced civil-military ties are part of Charter of Democracy agenda • Gilani assures Saifullah Abro of his 'return to house' after his resignation • PPP senator highlights key changes in bill • National Assembly session marred by trade of allegations • Bill likely to be tabled in lower house today

By Amir Wasim and Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The PML-N-led coalition government on Monday succeeded in manoeuvring the passage of the controversial 27th Constitutional Amendment Bill through the Senate, securing a two-thirds majority with the unexpected support of two opposition senators who voted against their party lines.

The bill, seeking crucial changes to a number of articles mostly dealing with the judiciary and the military leadership, was presented before the upper house of parliament for a final vote by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar amid noisy protest by the opposition senators.

As soon as Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani started putting up the bill for a clause-by-clause vote, the opposition senators started gathering in front of his dais and chanted anti-government slogans. They tore up copies of the bill and agenda and some of them were seen hurling the documents towards the law minister, prompting the sergeants-at-arm to make a human wall at the aisle between the treasury and the opposition benches to prevent any possible physical clash.

After staying in the house for a few minutes, the opposition senators belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) staged a walkout from the house, providing the government with an opportunity to have a smooth sail.

After holding the vote on the bill by division, Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani announced that the 27th Amendment bill had been passed with 64 to zero vote, which is not less than a two-thirds majority in the 96-member house.

After casting his vote against the party line, PTI's Saifullah Abro announced his resignation from the house. Speaking on the floor, Senator Abro said he had "voted only for [Field Marshal] Gen Asim Munir", adding that the Pakistani armed forces made the nation proud by defeating India in the May war.

He added that during the [passage of the] 26th Amendment, "my 10 family members were abducted, but my party [PTI] did not come to the rescue.

Interestingly, when he tendered his resignation, Senate Chairman Gilani said, "We will make you a senator again".

While taking the floor after the bill's passage, Leader of the House and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar termed the 27th Amendment "historic", saying that the amendment had been part of the Charter of Democracy signed in 2006 by the leadership of PML-N and PPP and later endorsed by all major political parties. He claimed that the concept of a federal constitutional court and balanced civil-military relations had been part of the unfinished agenda. Mr Dar made it clear that the seniority of sitting judges, including the chief justice of Pakistan, would remain protected under the new provisions.

LAW Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar speaks in the Senate before a final vote on the 27th Amendment bill on Monday.—White Star

Daylong drama

Earlier in the day, some ministers were seen struggling to

Continued on Page 5

PTI moves to disqualify Abro, JUI-F expels its senator over vote: Page 3

No 'connection' between Imran and PM immunity clause: Sanaullah — Page 3

Absolute impunity: Editorial on Page 6

Blast near New Delhi's Red Fort kills eight

NEW DELHI: A car explosion in the bustling heart of the Indian capital on Monday killed at least eight people and injured another 19, officials said.

Police have not given details on the cause, but said that forensic and anti-terrorism agencies were at the site, near the landmark Red Fort.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered his condolences to the families of those killed, and said he had "reviewed the situation" with Home Minister Amit Shah and other officials.

"Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones in the blast in Delhi ... may the injured recover at the earliest," Modi said in a statement. "Those affected are being assisted by authorities."

The blast took place in the early evening as people returned from work, close to a metro station in the crowded Old Delhi quarter of the city.

Ambulances streamed into a nearby public hospital, carrying several injured people, AFP reporters said.

Citing authorities at the hospital, New Delhi's deputy chief fire officer AK Malik told AFP that "eight people have died so far and 19 are injured."

'Heartbreaking'

New Delhi's Police Commissioner Satish Golcha told reporters that "a slow-moving vehicle stopped at a red light — an

Continued on Page 11

22 terrorists killed in KP operations: ISPR

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: At least 22 terrorists were killed in separate operations by security forces across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media affairs wing said on Monday.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that two operations in North Waziristan and Kohat were conducted on November 8 and 9.

Two terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in Wana tehsil of South Waziristan district on Monday, the ISPR said in a statement.

It further said that in a "heinous and cowardly act, terrorists belonging to Indian proxy Fitna-al-Khwarij" — a term used by the state to refer to terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) — attacked Cadet College Wana in South Waziristan district.

The statement read that the assailants attempted to breach the perimeter security; however, security forces swiftly foiled their attempt.

In desperation, the attackers rammed an explosive-laden vehicle

Continued on Page 5

SC judges demand full court amid executive onslaught

• Justice Mansoor, lawyers, ex-judges in two letters urge CJP to take a stand; Justice Minallah also writes letter • Senior puisne judge asks CJ Afridi to play role as guardian of judiciary, confront executive on 27th Amendment

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: As parliament moves to reshape the judiciary through the controversial 27th Amendment, two Supreme Court judges, in addition to several lawyers and former judges, have requested Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi to play his role and act as the guardian of the judiciary's independence.

Senior puisne judge Mansoor Ali Shah, in a six-page letter, described the proposed amendment as a political device to weaken the judiciary and urged CJP Afridi to confront the executive to lay down a rule that no amendments affecting the judiciary be adopted without prior consultations with superior judges.

"You [CJP] act not merely as its administrator but as its guardian," Justice Shah said while also requesting a full court meeting or preferably a joint convention of all constitutional court judges, including the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) and high courts, to articulate the judiciary's collective stance.

Besides Justice Shah, Justice Athar Minallah also wrote a seven-page letter along similar lines, but its content could not be known. Senior lawyer Faisal Siddiqui, in a two-page letter endorsed by ex-judges, also asked the CJP to take a stand.

Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah emphasised that this moment demanded leadership, transparency and institutional resolve. If such consultation is not initiated under CJ's stewardship, it will inevitably be seen as acquiescence and an abdication of the trust reposed in the high office, he added.

In his letter, Justice Shah also questioned the justification for creating the proposed Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), asking what constitutional vacuum it would seek to fill. The proposed FCC does not arise from any genuine reform agenda, and its judges will be appointed without any constitutional parameters, as was the case with the Constitutional Bench (CB), the letter said, adding that such an arrangement vested decisive power in the executive and invited manipulation of the judicial process. A court may serve transient political interests, but it will permanently damage the republic, he added.

The independence of the judiciary is not a privilege of judges; it is the people's protection against arbitrary power. "This moment demands that you [CJP], as head of

Continued on Page 5

Shariat court judges irked by 'sudden displacement'

Renovation, vacation of IHC building section underway amid concerns over space, staff size

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Judges of the Federal Shariat Court (FSC), including Chief Justice Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, have expressed serious reservations over their sudden relocation to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) premises from the FSC building, where the government has finalised arrangements to establish the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC).

Official sources said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has expedited renovation work on the third floor of the IHC building to accommodate the FSC. The IHC administration has been informed by a CDA contractor that three courtrooms will be ready within the next few days, while the construction of a fourth courtroom may take slightly longer.

At present, only three judges are serving in the FSC against the sanctioned strength of eight. Sources said the judges are "not comfortable" with the ongoing shifting process and have conveyed their concerns at the highest level.

A day of speculations in top court corridors: Page 12

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, accompanied by the Islamabad deputy commissioner, had visited the FSC building last week and it was recommended the location was most suitable for the newly proposed court.

'Insufficient space'

All three FSC judges, including Chief Justice Rehman, called on Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi to communicate their concerns over the relocation plan.

One of their key reservations, sources said, relates to the shifting of more than 350 FSC staff members to the IHC building where a section on third floor has been allocated for the FSC. The

Continued on Page 5

ON OTHER PAGES

Digital BISP payments from Ramazan

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced that financial assistance under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will be disbursed through digital wallets starting this Ramazan. Chairing a meeting on Monday to review progress on digitalisation of payments, the PM said the adoption of digital systems would help ensure sustainable economic growth, and curb corruption. **Page 9**